

# LABOR & DEMOCRACY

Labor Studies and Employment Relations 575:301  
Fall 2021

## SYLLABUS

### Class Meetings:

Synchronous online via Zoom  
Wednesday, 1:00–4:00pm  
see Canvas for details

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OH: Wednesday, 12-1pm via Zoom  
(or by appointment) – see Canvas for details

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### Course Overview:

A central issue of our time is the strength of democracy, especially in light of a variety of economic and social pressures that have made many countries, even in the West, turn to authoritarian parties and governments. This course probes the role that labor movements play for democracy in comparative perspective. Students will be introduced to workers' collective action as a worldwide phenomenon that has been central to the political economic development of capitalist democracies. Grounded in a historical institutionalist approach from political science, the course emphasizes how countries' unique histories and their institutional contexts have shaped both the political opportunities for workers' evolving collective action and the effects that such social mobilization has had on the relationship between capitalism and democracy.

With reference to two centuries of transatlantic history, the class covers both key political achievements of the working class as well as labor's contemporary challenges. Among the achievements, we focus in particular on the extension of democratic rights and the expansion of welfare states; among the challenges, we probe the needs to accommodate shifting social cleavages and devise strategies for revitalization.

Learning Objectives: The student is able to...

### ***21C Core Curriculum:***

- Analyze the degree to which forms of human difference shape a person's experiences of and perspectives on the world (Goal a).
- Analyze issues of social justice across local and global contexts. (Goal d).

### ***Labor Studies and Employment Relations Department:***

- Analyze a contemporary global issue in labor & employment relations from a multi-disciplinary perspective (Goal 7).
- Analyze issues of social justice related to work across local and global contexts (Goal 8).

### ***School of Management and Labor Relations:***

- Evaluate the context of workplace issues, public policies, and management decisions (Goal V).

***Additional Course Objectives from the Instructor:***

- Use the comparative approach to develop a solid understanding of labor movements' causes, nature and effects.
- Improve professional competencies such as critical thinking and problem solving; verbal and written communication; and interpersonal skills.

**Course Requirements (details at the end of the syllabus):**

In-Class Participation	40% of the course grade*
First Exam	30%
Second Exam	30%

\* “Active” contribution is about speaking up (based on reading, thinking, and good listening). This grade share is high so that I can give you credit simply for showing up (think about attendance as about 20%). Quiz grades will become part of your in-class participation grade (think of quizzes as making up 10%). There is also the option for an extra-credit paper to bring up your participation grade if so desired (more on that later). In general, the different elements of the participation grade will be weighed with a view toward a student’s strengths and effort.

**Course Outline:**

**Week 1: Building a Foundation (September 1)**

**Unions & Democracy**

Unite Here. 2020. Press Release on Canvassing. November 7.

Joseph A. McCartin. 2019. “How Air Traffic Controllers Helped End the Shutdown – and Changed History.” *Washington Post*, January 26.

**Collective Worker Action in Markets for Labor**

Paul Frymer and Dorian T. Warren. 2011. “What NBA Stars and Occupy Wall Street Protesters Have in Common.” *Washington Post*, October 28.

Abraham Kahn. 2020. Let’s Call Athletes ‘Workers,’ and Let’s Call these NBA Protests What They Were – Strikes.” *The Conversation*, August 28.

**Intersectional Movements**

Barbara Ransby. 2015. “The Class Politics of Black Lives Matter.” *Dissent*, Fall.

## SECTION I: TOOLS FOR ANALYZING LABOR MOVEMENTS

This section of the course probes how we can conceptualize labor movements: Who belongs to them? What does a movement seek to do? Why does a movement end up doing what it does?

### Week 2: Work & Collective Action (September 15)

#### **Is Collective Action Necessary?**

Rick Fantasia and Kim Voss. 2004. *Hard Work. Remaking the American Labor Movement*. Berkeley: UC Press, 1-33 (Chapter 1: “Why Labor Matters”).

Eyal Press. 2021. “America Runs on ‘Dirty Work.’” *New York Times*, August 13.

#### **Different Forms of Collective Action**

Joel Rogers and Wolfgang Streeck. 1994. “Workplace Representation Overseas: The Works Councils Story.” In Richard Freeman, ed. *Working under Different Rules*, New York: Russell Sage Foundation, only read pages 97-117.

Mike Elkby. 2013. “VW Isn’t Fighting Unionization—But Leaked Docs Show Right-Wing Groups Are.” *Bill Moyers & Company*, November 14.

→ *Special Guest: Julie Peters, SMLR Librarian, 3-3:45pm*

→ *Event: William Hurst (Cambridge), academic talk on labor in China, 4-5:30pm*

### Week 3: Labor as a Social Movement (September 22) – QUIZ!

#### **Illustration (I): The California Farm Worker Movement**

Cletus E. Daniel. 1987. “Cesar Chavez and the Unionization of California Farm Workers.” In Melvyn Dubofsky and Warren Van Tine, eds. *Labor Leaders in America*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, only read pages 350-373; remaining pages of the chapter are recommended but not required.

#### **Theory (I): The Dynamics of Building Social Movements**

Sidney G. Tarrow. 2011. *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics* (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1-15 (Introduction).

### Week 4: Institutions & Workers’ Collective Action (September 29)

#### **Illustration (II): Organized Labor & Immigration**

Janice Fine and Daniel J. Tichenor. 2009. “A Movement Wrestling: American Labor’s Enduring Struggle with Immigration, 1866-2007.” *Studies in American Political Development* 23(2): 218-248 (focus on introduction, conclusion & one time period).

**Theory (II): Context Shapes Social Action**

Sidney G. Tarrow. 1998. *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 71-73 (part of Chapter 5).

→ *Event: Expert panel on the results of Germany's Federal Election, 11am-1pm*

**SECTION II: LABOR MOVEMENTS IN COMPARATIVE HISTORY**

In this section of the course, we move beyond the United States to probe how labor movements have played pivotal roles in many countries' histories. We focus on the role of labor in shaping the fate of democracy and capitalism during the 1930s, and in the consolidation of welfare states after World War II.

**Week 5: Promoting Social Democracy (October 6) – QUIZ!**

**Establishing the Primacy of Politics**

Sheri Berman. 2009. "The Primacy of Economics versus the Primacy of Politics: Understanding the Ideological Dynamics of the Twentieth Century." *Perspectives on Politics* 7(3): 561-575.

**The Swedish Path to Social Democracy**

Sheri Berman. 2006. *The Primacy of Politics: Social Democracy and the Making of Europe's Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 162-176 (Chapter 7: "The Swedish Exception").

**Week 6: Limits to Social Democracy in Germany and the United States (October 13)**

**The German Path to National Socialism**

Sheri Berman. 2006. *The Primacy of Politics: Social Democracy and the Making of Europe's Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 125-151 (Chapter 6: "The Rise of Fascism and National Socialism").

**The American Labor Movement and the New Deal**

Sean Farhang and Ira Katznelson. 2005. "The Southern Imposition: Congress and Labor in the New Deal and Fair Deal." *Studies in American Political Development* 19(1): 1-30.

Choose one:

- Duncan Kelly. 2013. "Beyond the Politics of Fear (Review of Ira Katznelson's book *Fear Itself*)." *Financial Times*, May 11/12.
- Omer Aziz. 2019 "America Through Nazi Eyes." *Dissent*, Winter.
- Franklin D. Roosevelt. 1936. Address at Madison Square Garden, New York City. October 31.

**Week 7: Consolidating Welfare States (October 20)**

**Theorizing the Class Bases of Interwar Regimes Outcomes**

Gregory Luebbert. 1991. *Liberalism, Fascism, or Social Democracy: Social Classes and the Political Origins of Regimes in Interwar Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1-14 (Introduction). – Try to get the basic ideas (no need to understand everything).

**Bringing in the Middle Class after World War II**

Peter Baldwin. 1990. *The Politics of Social Solidarity. Class Bases of the European Welfare State 1875-1975*. Cambridge: CUP, pages 107-133 only (Chapter 2: “The Triumph of the Solidaristic Welfare State: Britain and Scandinavia”).

**Week 8: First Exam | No Class (October 27)**

**Prepare for Midterm Exam**

Go over review sheet, readings and notes from the preceding weeks.

Voluntary: Watch part of “Commanding Heights – Battle of Ideas.” Start at 18:22 min. and watch for 29:01 min., covering chapter 4 (“A Capitalist Collapse,” 8:48 min.), chapter 5 (“Global Depression,” 5:26 min.), chapter 6 (Worldwide War,” 7:00 min.) and chapter 7 (“Planning the Peace,” 6:47 min.): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gfRTpoYpHfw>

**SECTION III: KEY CHALLENGES FOR LABOR MOVEMENTS**

In this section, we review how contemporary labor movements have responded to some of the key challenges they face around the world today. We also reflect on how they might do better, addressing such questions as: How should labor movements adopt their strategies? Who and how should they seek to organize and mobilize for “contentious collective action”? Which goals should they pursue? How can they be revitalized? How can democracy be protected and deepened?

**Week 9: The Constitutive Role of Race (November 3)**

**Racial Capitalism**

Cedric J. Robinson. 2000. *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 9-28 (Chapter 1: “Racial Capitalism: The Nonobjective Character of Capitalist Development”).

**Labor, Democracy, and Race in the United States**

William P. Jones. 2013. “The Forgotten Radical History of the March on Washington.” *Dissent*, Spring.

Podcast: Always Already Podcast, Ep. 67 Joel Olson, “The Abolition of White Democracy.”  
<https://alwaysalreadypodcast.wordpress.com/2020/08/04/olson/>

### **Week 10: Shifting Gender Roles (November 10) – QUIZ!**

#### **The British Case**

Watch the movie “Made in Dagenham” (2010): <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1371155/>  
(available at different streaming services. Cost: \$3)

#### **Reproductive Labor**

Emily Callaci. 2018. “Seizing the Means of Reproduction.” *Dissent*, Summer, 128-131.  
Dorothy Sue Cobble. 2009. “It’s Time for New Deal Feminism.” *Washington Post*,  
December 13.

### **Week 11: American Democracy at the Crossroads (November 17)**

#### **After the Trump Presidency**

Timothy Snyder. 2021. “The American Abyss.” *New York Times*, January 9.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/09/magazine/trump-coup.html?searchResultPosition=1>

Stephen Rodrick. 2020. “Broken Promises: How Trump Betrayed the Autoworkers of Youngstown, Ohio.” *Rolling Stone*, October 14.  
<https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-features/lordstown-auto-plant-trump-broken-promises-1073686/>

Brandon Tensley. 2019. “How the American Dream Went From Meaning Equality to Meaning Capitalism.” *Pacific Standard*.

Voluntary/additional: Timothy Snyder. 2021. “The War on History Is a War on Democracy.” *New York Times*, June 29.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/29/magazine/memory-laws.html?smid=em-share>

### **Week 12: A Future for Social Democracy? (November 29) – MONDAY!**

#### **Defining the Status Quo**

Kathleen Thelen. 2019. “The American Precariat: U.S. Capitalism in Comparative Perspective.” *Perspectives on Politics* 17(1): 5–27. (focus of class discussion)

Tony Judt. 2009. “What is Living and What is Dead in Social Democracy?” *New York Review of Books*, December 17. (skim and try to get main points)

**Week 13: Toward a 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Labor Movement (December 1)**

**New Organizing Models**

Tamara Lee. 2018. "From Melting Pots to Intersectional Organizing." *Perspectives on Work*, 70-71.

Sarita Gupta, Stephen Lerner and Joseph A. McCartin (with Thomas A. Kochan, Kate Andrias, Cynthia Estlund, Tamara Lee, Jane McAlevey and John Hogan). 2019. "Why the Labor Movement has Failed – And How to Fix It." Forum, *Boston Review*, June 6. <http://bostonreview.net/forum/sarita-gupta-stephen-lerner-joseph-mccartin-why-labor-movement-has-failed%E2%80%94and-how-fix-it>

**Bargaining for the Common Good**

Marilyn Sneiderman and Secky Fascione. 2018. "Going on Offense during Challenging Times." *New Labor Forum* 27(1): 54-62.

**Week 14: Tasks Ahead & Course Wrap-Up (December 8)**

**Re-envisioning Democracy**

Aziz Rana. 2018. "Goodbye, Cold War." *n+1*, Winter.

Wendy Brown 2015. *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*. New York: Zone Books, 17-45 (Chapter 1: "Undoing Democracy: Neoliberalism's Remaking of State and Subject").

**Developing a Reform Narrative**

Sasha Abramsky. 2011. "A Conversation with Marshall Ganz." *The Nation*, February 2.

Marshall Ganz. 2009. "Why Stories Matter: The Art and Craft of Social Change." *Sojourners*, March, 18-19.

**Exam Week: Final Exam | No Class (December 16 - 23)**

**Prepare for Second Exam**

Go over review sheet, readings and notes from the preceding weeks.

Voluntary: Watch the video on crises and dilemmas of democracy at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kcx0mabB3dY>

## **Appendix I – Further Information on Course Assignments & Class Rules:**

### **IN-CLASS PARTICIPATION & ATTENDANCE**

Be prepared for class and always read the assigned materials before our meetings. You are expected to bring questions and comments about the course material so that you can participate in class discussions. With much of our time spent learning through discussion, it is necessary for everybody to participate. I might ask students to use their questions to stimulate discussions and will ensure broad participation. It is critical that we respect one another's thoughts and address our comments at others' ideas, not at people themselves. This course is not a forum for demeaning or threatening language. Rather than measuring the frequency with which you speak in class, your participation grade reflects how you balance reasoning, reading, and listening. Also, do not forget to take careful notes to complement the PowerPoint slides.

Students should plan to attend every course session. If for some unavoidable reason you must miss a class, please let me know in advance through the university's absence reporting website (<https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/>) so that your absence will not remain unexplained. If you are late or leave early repeatedly, and if you miss class unexcused, your participation grade will suffer.

### **QUIZZES**

There will be three short take-home quizzes during the semester (administered via Canvas). If you do the assigned readings, you should have no problem doing well on the quizzes. There will be no trick questions, nor will a complete understanding of the reading be required. Rather, the quizzes are geared to helping you engage with the provided materials by asking you to answer some very basic questions. Your performance in the quizzes will become part of your in-class participation grade.

### **EXAMS**

The midterm exam on the material from the first half of the course will be given via Canvas. It will be two hours in length (but I will give three so that you are less stressed). You will be able to independently pick the most suitable time for you during the week to take it. You will be asked to define key terms, provide short answers to questions, and write an essay.

The final exam will also be given via Canvas. It will again be two hours in length (but I will give three so that you are less stressed). You will again be able to independently pick the most suitable time for you to take it. This exam will test you on the second half of the course, and you will be expected to use what you have learned in class to advance clear arguments in two essays. I'll give you information more information about the content and structure of this exam a few weeks before the end of the semester.

### **COMMUNICATION**

Students are expected to check their Rutgers email accounts regularly for class announcements. Students are responsible for all information communicated to them via email by the instructor. Feel free to contact the instructor via email with questions or concerns about the course. I will do my best to get back to you within 24 hours. When emailing the instructor, always include "Labor & Democracy" in the subject line of your email.

## **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

While I encourage students to work together to understand theories and concepts, all written work must be your own. If you cite an author or use his/her ideas, please cite properly. Plagiarized assignments or evidence of cheating will result in a failing grade in the assignment and possibly in the course. Moreover, plagiarism may result in disciplinary action by the university.

## **DISABILITY STATEMENT**

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation.

If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.

## **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

**Helpdesk:** Rutgers Office of Information and Technology

**Email:** <https://it.rutgers.edu/help-support>

**Call:** 833-OIT-HELP

## **INTELLECUAL PROPERTY**

Lectures and materials utilized in this course, including but not limited to videocasts, podcasts, visual presentations, assessments, and assignments, are protected by United States copyright laws as well as Rutgers University policy. As the instructor of this course, I possess sole copyright ownership. You are permitted to take notes for personal use or to provide to a classmate also currently enrolled in this course. Under no other circumstances is distribution of recorded or written materials associated with this course permitted to any internet site or similar information-sharing platform without my express written consent. Doing so is a violation of the university's [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

As the instructor for this course, I have the responsibility to protect students' right to privacy. Classroom recordings of students will therefore be treated as educational records under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the U.S. federal law that governs access to educational information and records. Instructors and students must provide notification if any part of online sessions are to be recorded, and such recordings cannot be circulated outside the course.

**Appendix II – Tips from Political Scientist Henry Farrell on what constitutes good student writing (useful for exam essays):<sup>1</sup>**

1. **Read the Requirements for the Assignment:** This suggestion may be taken as insulting because it is so obvious; still, it is commonly ignored in practice. Professors usually drop some very strong hints about what they are looking for. It is best to pay attention to those hints. If assignments are ambiguous, you may want to be quite clear in saying how you are interpreting the posed question.
2. **Avoid Data Dumps:** Poor essays very often ignore the question asked in a quite specific way. The student spots some topic in the assignment that seems familiar, and immediately sets about writing an essay that tells the professor everything the student knows about that topic, in no particular order. For obvious reasons, such essays rarely receive high grades. Higher education in the social sciences and liberal humanities encourages students to criticize, to analyze, and to think. Mere demonstration that one possesses a disorganized body of knowledge on a topic suggests that this encouragement has fallen on untilled ground.
3. **Cut to the Chase:** Undergraduate essays frequently begin with an extended session of throat-clearing irrelevances and vague generalities. They talk about everything except the question that has been asked. Moreover, students sometimes state and re-state the question in a manner intended to suggest that they understand it, without ever providing an actual answer.

It is important that you get the introduction right. This is your best opportunity to grab the reader's attention and to persuade her that you have something interesting to say. Don't waste it. By the time the reader has finished reading the first two sentences, she should know which question the essay addresses. By the time the reader has finished reading the first five or six, she should have a pretty good idea of how the author is going to tackle the question.

When writing, remember that an essay does not necessarily have to convince its readers (particularly if it takes a controversial stand). A paper's introduction needs to signal to the reader that the author pursues a clear question, provides a clear answer to that question, and shows a willingness to address the best arguments against the case she is making.

4. **Organize:** Many student papers wander from point to point. They tack an introduction and conclusion onto a main body that does not have any internal system of order; or they do not have a distinguishable introduction, body, and conclusion at all. **You should structure your paper/essay at three levels:**
  - **Macro-structure:** This is the broad structure of the essay itself. Unless you feel very comfortable that you are an excellent writer, it is usually best to stick to the traditional frame of an introductory section, a main body, and a conclusion. The introduction tells the reader what you are going to say. The main body tells the reader what you are saying. The conclusions tell the reader what she has just read (perhaps adding

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<sup>1</sup> This is a condensed version. For the full elaboration, check Henry Farrell's webpage at [www.henryfarrell.net](http://www.henryfarrell.net).

some thoughts as to its broader implications if you are feeling adventurous).

- **Meso-structure:** This is perhaps the most commonly neglected element of structured writing. It concerns the paragraphs into which your prose is organized. Each paragraph should focus on one main point. The point of each paragraph should build on that in the previous paragraph, and create the foundations of the next. Each paragraph should be a necessary part of the overall structure of your essay.
- **Micro-structure:** What is true of the paragraph is also true of the sentence. Each individual sentence should flow in a logical and obvious way from the sentence before, and into the sentence after. This will provide your text with the coherence that it will need to successfully advance an argument.

**5. Use Simple, Direct Writing:** Good social science writing does not require striking metaphors or clever verbal constructions. Instead, it needs to communicate its arguments and evidence as clearly and unambiguously as possible. The implications for prose style are straightforward:

- Use direct language when at all possible. This not only reads better; it communicates clearly who is responsible for what.
- Prefer simple words to complex words, and plain language to jargon. Sometimes it will be impossible to avoid jargon or obscure terms. However, it will usually be possible to use simple terms to convey your meaning. Plain language makes life easier for the reader, and it also makes it harder for the writer to get away with nonsense. If you use plain language you will be forced to confront your areas of weak understanding and to rectify them.
- Use straightforward sentence structures rather than complex ones. Again, simple sentences usually read better. You should typically prefer simple sentences with the bare minimum of sub-clauses needed to convey your argument. Formless and incoherent sentences usually suggest formless and incoherent thought, and indeed they may plausibly cause intellectual incoherence.